

I. AN UNPLANNED JOURNEY INTO HIGHER EDUCATION

Joan S. Stark
University of Michigan

The editor, John Smart, has invited me to describe how I entered higher education as a field of study, highlighting major individuals and developments that shaped my career. In addition, he asked that I give my perspectives on how the field of higher education has evolved during my career and offer suggestions to current scholars about possible future developments. I am honored to have this opportunity and especially pleased to be the first woman to write an autobiographical essay in this series. As I collected my thoughts, I was struck first by how unplanned my career development has been; second, by how vastly different my story is from those of my esteemed male colleagues who have written articles in this series; and third, by the fact that I am the first writer in the group whose advanced degree was in higher education rather than in a traditional discipline.

BALANCING GENDER, AMBITION, AND OPPORTUNITY IN THE 1950S

I certainly never aimed to be a higher education professor or researcher. Looking back, however, I suppose there were some predictors, such as my involvement in student government at Syracuse University. In fact, the positive interactions of Syracuse administrators with student leaders in the 1950s strongly influenced me. Over the years, I have observed that many individuals study higher education because of such influences during their undergraduate years. Other than this exposure to the roles of campus administrators, my career development was for the most part accidental. In the 1950s, what a young woman should *not* aspire to was much more important than what she *should* aspire to. Reflecting on what brought me to the field of higher education has

caused me to realize how important gender used to be and how the context for women's career development has changed over the years. My male colleagues' careers were often influenced by issues related to military service but, apparently, seldom by gender or family demands; my story is quite different from that.

My school teacher parents had high expectations and, in their view, high ambitions for me. My father encouraged me to study the sciences (definitely not the impractical arts or literature!) and believed that a teaching certificate was good insurance for a young woman. After spending three college summers as an analytical chemist at Eastman Kodak, a job with minimal human contact, I accepted more readily the idea that I should be a public school science teacher. My father was also convinced that I should begin teaching immediately after graduating from Syracuse, so that my master's degree study would be more meaningful. Thus, I was pleased when, in my senior year in 1956-57, the chemistry department at Syracuse invited me to be a teaching assistant in general chemistry, replacing a graduate student who left.

For a brief period that year, I wondered aloud why I was not applying to medical school like most of my classmates. Despite my father's scientific interests, he was quite certain that medical school would be wasted on me since, like most young women, I would surely marry and have children rather than practice. My mother thought nursing or dental hygiene much more fitting than medicine or dentistry. Of course, had I strongly desired to become a doctor, I could have prevailed. Or, had I been convinced that the life of a research chemist was desirable, I might have accepted a casual invitation to follow one of my professors to his laboratory at a new university. Instead, I obtained a fellowship for full-time master's study in science education at Teachers College, Columbia University. When my father became severely ill just after my college graduation, I abandoned that path and under the duress of financial uncertainty fell back on his original plan. I got a job teaching physics at a high school close enough to New York City to let me start my graduate work at Columbia, part time.

My mother felt that when I was married I would be "settled," i.e., out of moral danger, during times when increasing freedom involved "temptations" for young women. Protecting me from such hazards, she thought, would then be my husband's responsibility. I became "settled" when I met Bill Stark, a merchant marine captain who was studying mathematics education at Teachers College, and married him during the spring of my first year of teaching. I went on maternity leave in May of the second year and the first of our four children was born in July. It caused quite a stir that I was allowed to teach for eight months of my pregnancy, since the school district's rules in 1959 dictated that a pregnant teacher must leave before the condition was "visible." Because the school very much wanted students to pass the New York State Regents examinations and because substitute physics teachers were hard to find, I was allowed to continue

despite several parents who complained that their daughters should not view a pregnant teacher. Times certainly have changed. My three daughters have had the right to remain at their jobs until the day they gave birth, if they wanted to.

Finances were tight during our son's and first daughter's infancies. Because a kindly mother of six was willing to baby-sit, I taught as a substitute in several Long Island high schools while continuing my graduate studies. I enjoyed the academically-oriented schools, especially when students perceived I could offer them something in science and math classes. It was miserable at some other high schools, especially when I was called upon to teach physical education or even wood shop. Meanwhile, at Teacher's College, I changed my specialization from science education to educational administration and became certified as a high school principal in New York State. Somehow, I was convinced that when I finally returned to teaching full time, I could do more to improve schools as an administrator.

A turning point in my life occurred when a Columbia professor asked me to edit a paper he was preparing for a conference. His confidence and appreciation led me to write to several publishers proposing that I might do hourly freelance work on science and mathematics textbooks. I explained that I wanted to spend more time with my children but I also needed work. I was in luck. The early 1960s was a period of extensive curriculum revision in math and science and my skills fit a niche. For about nine years I worked at home on emerging programs in physics and chemistry and the "new math." As I gave birth to our third child, I progressed from editing copy and preparing indexes to writing answer books and teachers' manuals. Yes, I was a ghost writer for authors who didn't want to bother to develop materials for teachers. I learned to add and multiply in bases two, three, and four as quickly as I could in base ten!

After far too many years, I realized that I could ask to be listed as a co-author or otherwise acknowledged in some of these materials. Having publications with my name on them helped me to bridge the employment gap that so many women experienced in the 1960s and 1970s when they tried to reenter the job market after a period of child-raising.

DOCTORAL STUDY, 1967-71

The first publication with my name on it and our fourth child appeared at about the same time. Almost simultaneously, Bill's community college needed a adjunct chemistry instructor on short notice for an evening class. I was offered the position for one semester — as a special exception to the anti-nepotism laws then in effect. I ended up teaching several semesters and this opportunity, more than anything else, led directly to my ensuing career in higher education.

It was the late 1960s, and collective bargaining was just beginning in the



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